



Paper Recycling Tote Bags

IDEM – Office of Pollution Prevention and
Technical Assistance

Partially funded by:

The Indiana Greening the Government Incentive Funding Program

Submitted to:

Indiana Greening the Government Program

402 W. Washington St., Rm. W-478

Indianapolis, IN 46204

March 10, 2005



Paper Recycling Tote Bags

IDEM - OPPTA

Brief Project Description:

The purpose of this project was to increase the visibility of the Greening the Government Program and facilitate paper recycling by providing a tote bag for IDEM employees to use as office and mixed paper collection bags at home. Employees would be able to bring the full bags with them to work and recycle the paper through the Greening the Government recycling program already in place. 150 tote bags made from recycled plastic soft drink bottles were purchased from Reflections by David; the bags were imprinted with the Greening the Government logo, the IDEM logo, and the text "Paper Recycling Tote" and "This tote bag was made from recycled soft drink bottles. Close the Loop – Buy Recycled."

The original distribution plan was to distribute tote bags to all IDEM senior staff first, then to OPPTA staff, then to the approved teleworkers, and then offer them to all agency staff. An agreement to use the bag only for paper recycling and to track and report usage as requested was required of all recipients. By using the tote bags, more materials would be recycled through the Greening the Government programs, with the hope that more office paper (a high value material) would find its way into the program.

- Project Dates: Tote bag distribution began April, 2004 – distribution and use is ongoing.
- Location: Indiana Government Center North and South, Indianapolis, IN, 46204
- Contact: Kristin Brier, Source Reduction and Recycling Branch, kbrier@dem.state.in.us or 317-234-2754.
- Program Results: Since the beginning of the project, participants have brought in 4,759 pounds (2.37 tons) of their home office paper and mixed paper for recycling. Participants report that the bags are easy to use and convenient, although a larger bag would allow more recycling and tracking their usage is inconvenient. More paper is likely being recycled than has been reported, as some users forgot to track their usage. Due to difficulties in distribution, only 36 tote bags have been distributed to date. Because of the requirement to use it only for paper recycling



and to track and report usage, many senior staff members and others who were offered tote bags did not choose to participate in the program. In addition, the distribution is time intensive since OPPTA is located in a building separate from the rest of IDEM. OPPTA does plan a renewed distribution and participation effort to coincide with Clean Your Files and Earth Day events this spring; we are also considering relaxing the requirements that go along with using the bags to encourage more participation. We recommend that anyone planning a similar project distribute bags or other containers at a central event, and devise a central tracking method to determine results rather than asking users to keep the information.

"I'd bring in more office paper at a time, but I'm afraid that I'll bust the seams on the bag--other than that, no problems" said Stacie Tucker, Office of Water Quality and faithful tote bag user.

"Since I have the bag, I'm a regular recycler" said Mary Hoover, Office of Water Quality. "Before the bag it stacked up and a concerted effort had to be made to clear it out. With the bag, I hang it on a door, fill it up and bring it in when it is full."